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Bd. Feb. 1871.







Richardson, Joseph.

A

SERMON,

IN TWO PARTS,

DELIVERED ON THE SABBATH,

JUNE 28, 1856.

THE CLOSE OF THE

FIFTIETH YEAR OF HIS MINISTRY,

AS

Pastor of the First Church and Parish

IN HINGHAM,

BY JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

HINGHAM:

J. FARMER.....PRINTER.

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1857. Mar. 23.

Gift of
Rev. F. D. Huntington.
of Cambridge.

SERMON IN THE MORNING.

PHILIPPIANS I—9, 10, 11.

“AND THIS I PRAY, THAT YOUR LOVE MAY ABOUND YET MORE AND MORE IN KNOWLEDGE, AND IN ALL JUDGMENT; THAT YE MAY APPROVE THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT; THAT YE MAY BE SINCERE, AND WITHOUT OFFENCE, TILL THE DAY OF CHRIST; BEING FILLED WITH THE FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH ARE BY JESUS CHRIST UNTO THE GLORY AND PRAISE OF GOD.”

THE text announces concisely, distinctly and fully the design and object of the Gospel of the Son of God; of all Christian devotions and ordinances; if I have rightly apprehended them, the design and object, from the beginning, of the founders of this Church and Parish, and of the labors of those who have been devoted to them as their Ministers.

That you may abound in love to God and to all whom he loves; that you may approve the things that are excellent; that you may be sincere and without offence, being filled with the fruits of righteousness unto the glory and praise of God. This great design and consummation of the hope of our being have *we* worthily pursued?

Fellow Christians and Friends of this

First Church and Parish in Hingham :

Let us remember that we are descendants and successors in the time honored inheritance of those who first founded this parish, formed this church, and erected this ancient house of worship. Not to boast would we mention this, but from the memory of the past to be more deeply impressed in our own hearts with a sense of obligation and of sacred duty to the future. A trust of great responsibility is committed to us. This trust, the most precious of all our bequests, those around us rising into life and those who shall live after us may justly expect to be held, and transmitted to them unimpaired. On this occasion a reminiscence of a few occurrences seems to be pertinent.

It is now two hundred and twenty-one years since this town was incorporated. At the time when this was incorporated, the towns in the colony, generally, if not without exception, were by law constituted parishes or religious societies. This town was incorporated in July and this church was formed the next September.

The first minister of the town was Rev. PETER HOBART. Our history does not give the precise time of his ordination. He deceased in the fifty-third year of his ministry, nine of which he passed

in England, in the seventy-fifth year of his age.* The Rev. JOHN NORTON, the second minister of this church and parish, continued in the ministry nearly thirty-eight years, and deceased in the sixty-sixth year of his age.

The Rev. EBENEZER GAY, the third minister of this church and parish, continued in the ministry almost sixty-nine years. He deceased at the very advanced age of ninety years and upwards; an instance of longevity in the ministry almost without a parallel. It is not my province to-day to eulogize the departed, however highly distinguished and honored.

The fourth minister of this church and parish was the Rev. HENRY WARE, who after a ministry of some less than eighteen years, was dismissed, and entered upon his office as Hollis Professor of Harvard University.

All these were beloved and honored in life and in death. Beloved and honored do we say? They passed not the ordeal of a calling, I think often the most severe in this world, without opposing elements and wounding reproaches. But through him who loved them, they were conquerors and more than conquerors.

* See History of Hingham, by Hon. S. Lincoln.

From the labors and sacrifices of Peter Hobart and John Norton, and Ebenezer Gay, and others like them, blessings above all estimate have descended to us who possess the inheritance they left.

Is it not delightful to think of those ministers, blest for having turned many to righteousness, now clothed with light, with many stars in the crown of their rejoicing, with the multitude they instructed and comforted ; and, as shepherds led through the wilderness of human life, now, as we trust, giving glory to him who sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb who once was slain for them and for us ?

On the second day of the month of July, the anniversary of his ordination, the minister who now addresses you, the fifth of this church and parish, will have continued the long period of a half century in his ministry here.

With you, he has to confess, he has been “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,” declaring unto you, and to a multitude departed from life, the testimony of God ; “that ye may be sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness.”

The completion of a half century of the connexion between this church and parish and their minister, I have thought worthy of some notice. What connexion could be more sacred, more momentous

to the parties immediately interested, or more solemn in responsibility, can you tell me ?

Of the ordaining council who consecrated this connexion, not one remains. Few of those who took an active part in my settlement continue in life.

Of the whole number in the parish above the age of seventy, there are twenty men. Of women above seventy years of age now connected with the parish there are nearly the same number. If these, during half a century, have had cause to be thus firm and steady in their attachment to the parish and their minister, the fact is worthy of grateful notice to-day. It is wisely ordained by Divine Providence, that some live to advanced age to bear witness of the past, and of hopes and prayers that have been kindly answered. Can an instance be found, in this time of rapid changes, of so many persons of so advanced age, having been parishioners of the same minister fifty years ? Seven of the number are past the age of eighty years. A large number of young men, at that time, not of lawful age to vote, manifested their choice, in addition to the large majority of legal voters.

Comparatively few among us can remember the clouds of the morning of the ordination day—their breaking away—the bright and beautiful meridian, and the calm, clear evening that succeeded.

Upon what a multitude he who survives has been called to see the grave close, whose spirits now are in the spirit world, witnesses for or against him, where the memory and the results of the past shall be eternal !

It is not an ordinary occasion we now witness. Few are the instances in our time of a connexion between a parish and their minister continuing half a century. Of the whole number of ministers recognized as of our denomination, only one remains whose connexion with the same parish has been so long continued as ours has been. If peace between the parties in a connexion so sacred, be a blessing, the blessing commanded in the Saviour's last words to his friends, in this we have not been excelled. Between those who so continually meet around the same altar for communion with the Infinite One, if denied this blessing, we know not what religious improvement could be made, or what sanctification of heart and life could be experienced. Never came to men on earth more needful or holier words than these from the lips of the Divine Teacher, in parting with those most tenderly beloved, "Peace be unto you."

The object of this connexion the text declares. The ministry of the Gospel, replete with sublimest truth, and examples of purest virtue, with precepts,

persuasives, warnings, redeeming influences of God's own Spirit, for the salvation of our world.

Two inquiries are appropriate to this occasion :

I. What have been the minister's actual duties here, and how have they been performed ?

II. Have the ministrations of the Gospel here been duly attended and improved ?

The minister's duties, and the performance of them.

First, The duty of preaching, and of performing the devotions of public worship, and of administering the several offices required of a christian minister.

On each Sabbath, at least, two discourses are desired and expected, suited to enlighten and to reconcile men to God, to move to duties of life on which he has made the happiness of two worlds to depend. How often the thought, " Who is sufficient for these things," must oppress the minister's heart—can the hearers imagine ? He is not to shun to declare any part of the counsel of God. But much care and good judgment are required to give to each and all of the flock " a portion in due season." Early in my professional life, I came to the conclusion, that the Christian minister, having charge of a religious society, does far more to extend the Gospel of the grace of God, by his unremitted influence to im-

plant its plain principles and to promote its practices among the people of his charge, than would be possible for him by preparing and publishing the most elaborate and popular works on the doubtful questions that have been so much used to divide christians, and to multiply sects.

The first official duty I performed, after my ordination, was the solemnization of a marriage, an institution I have ever considered as inferior in importance and sacredness to none in the social state. It brings those who take upon themselves its obligations into relations the most sacred, designed, as I view them, to form and to sanctify affections and principles as enduring as the human soul. I think the teachings of our religion authorize us to view them in this light. He that loveth not his nearest friend, his parent, his sister, his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen ?

This rite I have solemnized between 534 couples, including, occasionally, some not of the parish. Thus to twice this number of individuals, as is my custom, I have administered the solemn vow to be "faithful, until death dissolves the tie;" that the connexion might be truly happy, and the family a bosom of purity and grace, for the reception and nurture of such as are of the kingdom of heaven,

and as much as possible to be led in its holy and beautiful pathway.

The founders of the colonies evidently considered marriage both a civil and a christian institution, to be regulated by christian laws. Though Capt. Joshua Hubbard of this town, by the court of the colony was "appointed and empowered to join persons in marriage," there is not much reason to doubt that the Rev. Peter, or some other minister, was usually present, by christian prayer to solemnize the marriage vows. The statutes of the British realm, at that period, did not allow ministers of the dissenting order to join persons in marriage. Those who violated these statutes were liable to punishment for felony, a high crime.

The next duty I performed as an ordained minister, was the administration of the communion to this church.

At the commencement of my ministry, though the parish was large, the number of members of the church was small, as is generally the case now in religious societies of the various denominations. This, to me, at the close of the labors of my immediate predecessor, a learned, able and honored minister, was a matter of surprise. Causes have continued here, I can not remember, without painful regret, to prevent large accessions to this church.

Though various denominations have opened their numerous doors of admission, and labored abundantly to gather into their folds, the number of communicants bears a small proportion to the number of worshippers in the several congregations. That the blessings of such an institution should be refused by so many, can not be otherwise than deeply lamented by all friends of him whose love and death have laid such claims of gratitude upon every living soul.

Never have I personally solicited individuals to become members of the church, apprehending that none but such as are inclined by calm, deliberate, perfectly free determination to obey the plain precepts of the gospel, should be induced to take upon themselves obligations so momentous. I think that I may say that we have not entertained the opinion that none can be heirs of salvation except such as have been members of the visible church on earth. Too much reliance may be placed on membership in the church, as if this were a substitute for a good life. Such reliance must naturally confirm the *doubts* of those not of the church, of its good influence upon the life. But if the christian profession and communion have an influence to make even *some* purer in life than they otherwise would be, then to such are they blessings above price.

Here, as elsewhere, has prevailed a common idea, that an unblemished life ought be an indispensable qualification for joining the church. Had such been a condition, some less than even the number of twelve would have been received as members of the first christian church, and to partake of the appointed memorials of the love and death of the Founder, from his own hand, with counsels from heaven and words of peace and love from his own lips.

Have not those, not of the church, of all persons the greatest need to feel the assurance of an unblemished life ?

Some entertain the opinion that none should join the church but, such as have evidence of a special, miraculous change of heart. Others, that those who join the church should first have a clear and full understanding of all the great truths of revealed religion. Had the Divine Teacher required such conditions, never on earth would he have had a church, or a single follower.

During my ministry, one hundred and eighty-four have been received as members. Among these a few have been received by transfer from other churches, and others have had their relation transferred to other churches.

Here, during the half century, no controversy, no division has disturbed the peace of the church or

the parish. We have been liberal in practice as in name. Many years we have had pulpit exchanges with ministers of various denominations, widely differing on some points of religious sentiment.

To our communion we invite Christians of every name. We would receive others as Christ receives us, and all his friends, in a state of great imperfection. Order and peace among those who meet around the same altar and the same communion table, and between them and him who ministers to them, are blessings with which any accessions of wealth or boast of numbers is not worth mentioning. Yet true peace is not to be purchased by the perversion of truth and right. To please men, our allegiance to God is not to be violated. With truth, as with much pleasure, I think I may say, we have been accustomed to think less of long controverted, speculative articles of belief as evidences of *religion*, than of obedience to the plain precepts of the gospel.

The number of baptisms I have administered is five hundred and fifty. A small part of these were baptized within the last twenty years. Neglect of this ordinance has become extensive of late years, as appears from published reports of a number of Christian denominations. During the first two centuries since the settlement of the Puritans in New-England, a much larger proportion than now of the

people, were church members, and almost without exception the children of such were baptized in infancy and childhood. This ordinance, I have considered as a solemn pledge, on the part of parents, to give to their children, a Christian education, to which they have a right as sacred as to their existence. The utility and importance of the ordinance, in this view, cannot be too highly commended. It is a beautiful remark of one whose praise is in our churches, that "Christianity stoops to the cradle to take our infants into its arms from the hour of birth, and to set its seal upon them from their earliest breath."*

The Sabbath School was early adopted in this parish, and has been well sustained. We have taken an earnest interest in this, for its design and evident tendency to lead our youth to an early knowledge and experience of christian duties and pleasures, and to engage the minds of parents and teachers in habits of thought and of life, of immeasurable importance in the discharge of sacred obligations.

Is it not true, that, in our time, the greatest want is, not of good sermons and prayers, or of churches and places of worship, or of good books, but of truly christian homes, where, whatever proclivity to evil

* Dr. Channing.

be found in human nature, it may be early trained and disciplined into subjection, to the higher faculties that God breathes into every soul ? That which is born of flesh is nought but flesh. That which the Spirit of God breathes into being, can it be other than pure, as its source ? Can not education teach and train the intellectual and moral nature to keep in subjection all the proclivities of the lower nature ?

Let me say to those who have yet before them duties to fulfil, on which their happiness so much depends, that valuable as is the Sabbath School, it can not do its work well, most successfully, without the diligent teaching of parental love in a christian home, where the first thoughts of the heart may be formed to virtue, and turned towards God ; and the holy and beautiful path-way of purity and peace is early made plain and attractive by familiar examples.

In every department of life do we not learn our best lessons much more from good *models* than the most eloquent words ? Let christians, all who entertain the christian hope, be determined to permit, in domestic life, no unkind, untrue or deceitful words or actions, to pass unreprieved. *There*, let dishonest and wrong conduct be sure of correction, and let the christian precepts be exemplified, and in a few years, can we doubt, that our parishes

will yet be much more prosperous, and the churches built up as their best friends desire?

Faithful descendants of the faithful, with the advantages of this age,—will you not make good, will you not adorn with eminent Christian examples in the sanctuary and the church, and in the walks of life, the places once of the blest above, now dwelling in that

“Land upon whose blissful shore
Rests no shadow, falls no stain ;—
Where those who meet shall part no more?”

The number of funerals in the parish during the time of my ministry, is some more than *nine hundred*, including those in my absence, whilst engaged in other spheres of service, which were attended by clergymen supplying in my place.

In the house of mourning, how unfit the christian minister must be to perform his office, unless himself attending with the unaffected feelings and sentiments of a sympathizing friend, and acquainted with those whose wounded hearts he comes to heal.

Though it be true that death is always a dispensation of divine love, to those to whom continuance in life could confer neither present nor future benefit, the departure from time to eternity, of those tenderly beloved, can not, ought not be otherwise than solemnly impressive, and sanctifying to the heart and the life of the surviving. The conqueror of death

with the power of a glorious resurrection in his word—did he not weep in sympathy with his friends when they beheld a brother's form in the paleness and silence of death?

In parting with those separated from us by the impenetrable vail, our thoughts and prayers, we have endeavored should be such as to confirm our faith, that the chastenings of God, however mysterious, are always in love—to the submissive heart—a faith always healing. Yet, as certainly as this life is connected with the future, often upon the heart not only of the minister, but of other friends, the question ought to press with deep solemnity, whether duties to those endeared have been fulfilled with due regard to the event of separation, and the near disclosures of the eternal state.

With us, seldom is the minister called to be present with his parishioners in the last hour of life. This I have thought attributable to the just impression, that there is danger in the confidence men may be led to place in the religion of a few last moments—danger, that less, or no importance, will they attach to the duties of an obedient life. The penitence and prayer that can not mend the *life*, though not useless, have but little to recommend them. It is the calm, unterrified faith that best secures the light of God's countenance in the dark valley. Glo-

rious as is the grace of the gospel, it has no substitute for a religious life. What besides the means we now use, can be devised to make a religious life the business of every day, intended by its Author to begin in us as early as the power of thought ?

We abound in houses for Christian worship, in Christian churches and books. The greatest of all wants here and elsewhere is the want of Christian homes, daily exemplifying the plain yet most lovely and beautiful graces and virtues of the Christian life. So far as my ministry has failed to produce this result, I have cause for deep mourning. Is there not a great, practical lesson designed for us in this history, that the blessed Teacher, who came from God, was himself first committed to the keeping of a pure, parental, retired home, to be prepared to rise to the consummation of his glorious mission ? Is the conviction duly felt, that it is not the least of the purposes of the grace of God to save those coming from his bosom, heaven born, and of his kingdom, from falling into the guilt of sin ?

The Sabbath School has done much, and we hope will do much more, to make up for deficiencies in the homes of youth. Can we doubt that the six days of children in sensual, vicious and degrading associations, must do more to corrupt the heart and the life, than the best devotions of the seventh can do to enlighten and sanctify them ?

To make known to our youth the plain precepts of the gospel and its beautiful examples of Christian duty ; are not these as really parts of the ministry of the grace of God as are the most eloquent proffers of forgiveness to the penitent, and of redemption to the lost ? Salvation from any degree of guilt is a work of divine grace. To think that none but those set apart to the clerical profession have duties to perform in the dispensation of this grace, is a sad mistake. The daily duties of the Christian life are the best expounders of Christian doctrine. The *deeds* that Jesus wrought were the power of God to minds often imperfectly apprehending the glorious truths he uttered in *words*. The tree that bore not *good fruit*, our Master ordered to be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. Without that, to him it was offensive. Deeds of honesty, kindness and charity—without these, what value could there be in the most eloquent sermons ever delivered ?

Frequent familiar visiting from house to house, in a large parish, widely scattered, I have thought required of me more time and labor than were compatible with other duties. A few, in the course of the week, may be pleased with the calls of the minister, but if the preparation for the instruction of the whole congregation, on the Sabbath, must in consequence, be made in a more hurried and imperfect manner, I have thought the social calls might better

be omitted. How may the minister's time and labor be made most profitable to his *whole* charge, I have judged to be the question his duty required him to meet. To interrupt the regular and proper business of the household, the farm, the workshop, or other places of secular employment, with my visits, I have always felt reluctant. In a parish of two hundred families, or more, *professional* visits on various occasions, necessarily require much time. If others are wiser than I have been, I have reason to be thankful. Doubtless they are.

Occasions of death and mourning, where many families are so connected that each afflictive event often requires a number of visits, necessarily demand much of a minister's time, and of sympathy, more wearing to his mind than the labors of the study.

Hardly is it possible for those who have not known it by experience, to realize how arduous are the duties of a minister's life, called as he sometimes is the *same day*, to perform the services of public worship, to administer baptism, receive into membership in the church, dispense the symbols of communion, attend a funeral, and solemnize a marriage. Though seldom, such instances I have known.

Preparation in the study, to give instruction to the congregation every Sabbath, requires almost incessant, anxious labor, often fatal to health, burthened as it must be with a solemn sense of responsi-

bleness to which the mind can set no bounds. If you must take heed what you *hear*, how must we take heed what we *preach* !

It has been my earnest desire and prayerful endeavor to preach—not the doctrines, commandments or creeds of men—but Christ and him crucified—crucified, not to appease the wrath or satisfy the justice of God ; Christ crucified by the hearts and hands of wicked men ; submitted to by him who resigned himself to die, to show them the evil of sin, that they might repent and live.

On a great number of texts I have discoursed, such as I deemed most important, and best adapted to inculcate the duties of the Christian life, or most liable to be so misunderstood as to mislead the inquirer to know what he must do. Firm as is my faith that the human soul bears an image of the Divine Father, I have not felt authorized to exalt reason, or conscience, or any other faculty, as the voice of God, except so far as enlightened by his revealed truth. No principle or faculty of the human soul is infallible. God's truth is needed, as surely as the earth needs the sun.

The gospel, especially, I have considered as a system of rules and examples of *life*, and of light from God of restoring power, of infinitely greater importance to men, than a solution of the profoundest mysteries, or a decision on all questions of con-

troversy could have been. Christ came to teach *us* how to live.

The intellect, to some extent, may be wrong, and yet the heart and life mainly right. To be conservative, not of human systems of theology, but of the unadulterated truths of the gospel, I have deemed a great duty. For progress in the *right* direction we are designed—progress, not fitful or eccentric, but from the feeblest conceivable ray of likeness of him who created us, to rise to the stature of the perfect, and from glory to glory, in the boundless future.

Those who have been most constant and observing in their attendance upon my ministry, I trust can bear me witness, that whilst I have often labored to give my views of the Christian ordinances, neither censorious remarks, nor an exclusive spirit has been indulged against those who entertain opposite views.

I have believed, and aimed to teach, that no forms or ceremonials, however exactly observed, or strenuously contended for, can atone for the indulgence of an uncharitable spirit, or be accepted of God as substitutes for the fruits of the Christian life.

If to prefer the teaching of Christ far above all the doctrines, commandments and creeds of uninspired men, is being evangelical, then I claim to have been truly evangelical. In this respect, as far as I can ascertain, I have followed the examples of those

who from the first have been the ministers of this parish.

On this occasion I have thought it just, in giving some account of my duties and labors, for so long a term, to make some statement of the principles and motives by which it has been my prayerful endeavor to be governed. To exemption from error and imperfection, I make no claim. Trial, deeply painful, is often the lot of the christian minister. In the school of adversity, the greatest, best lessons of life are learned. To meet and conquer evils—this is christian virtue. One most formidable enemy of domestic peace, of social virtue and public prosperity has been foiled. Others are rushing upon us with hot violence, demanding all the wisdom and courage of the people and their ministers—the christian panoply in which our fathers met and conquered their mightiest foes.

We have been thinking of the past, not to boast of it—not to live upon it—but to realize what the present demands of us to keep sacred, to perpetuate the inheritance, ours in trust, not to be lost but with everlasting dishonor.

Here I pause at present, proposing to speak in the afternoon more particularly of the duty of the parish.

SERMON IN THE AFTERNOON.

IN the preceding discourse I endeavored to give some account of the labors and duties of the minister of this parish during the last half century, as briefly as I could with due regard to the occasion. The account to be given by the people and the minister, let us remember, is not to have a final close with this life. It should be remembered also, that the minister of a parish is not to be responsible for all the teaching they have received.

There is great and lasting influence upon the minds of his parishioners, from the sentiments, manners, and customs of parents and others with whom they have been early connected. And besides, during a part of my ministry, a considerable number gathered around this altar and communion table, who had listened, as they have often told me, to the prayers and sermons of the aged and venerable GAY; and they with many others had attended the ministry of the learned and honored WARE. From *others* much *more* than from the minister of the

last half century they had derived the elements that form the character. Common and other schools, either to aid or embarrass ministers, have great power. The character of men transmits an influence far more enduring than their possessions to their heirs. Can we reasonably doubt, that the inflexible, persevering spirit of HOBART, lives to this hour, not only in *lineal* descendants, but in the descendants of those to whom he ministered? It is enough for the minister of the last half century that he must answer for his own, and not for the influence of pre-existing men, and principles, and institutions. Nor can he take to himself any praise of what was excellent in them, any further than as he has been true and faithful to maintain the integrity of what was committed to his trust. We all would, I hope, be reformers of what is evil, but invincibly conservative, to the last, of what is good; and forever vigilant not to exchange the good for that which is worse.

This is an age of reform. Let it reform especially whatever is erroneous in the theology and the practices of christian individuals and christian bodies.

Could those with us fifty years ago, and now departed, speak to us in the truest love, would it not be to warn us of danger from insidious enemies in the heart, nearer home than Kansas, or the United States Senate chamber; enemies, compared with

which, all others are powerless ? Would it not be to admonish us how the passion for lucre perishes the love of justice and of right, and the love of ease and luxury lulls down the soul into a state of feebleness that deems the holy Sabbath a day of great hardship, and plain bold truth from God too much for its delicate nerves to endure.

Will you allow me to give the history of what some of us know ? When I remember with what constancy the good, true hearted men and women, fifty and even less than forty years since, unintimidated by a threatening cloud, or a flake of snow, or a breath of summer air, were in their places of worship, and witness how these, *now* sometimes overcome our congregations, I confess myself warned of signs of degeneracy. And yet this, I believe, follows the fashion of the day less than almost any other parish.

We are now met on an occasion such as can seldom occur. A ministry of even twenty or ten years continuance is not frequent. An occasion like this, it is hardly possible any present will ever again witness. You will allow me, as all ministers have a right to claim, to use great plainness of speech in declaring truth, and pleading a cause that involves all that makes existence a blessing. As I proceed, I may be allowed to make repeated reference to the discourse in the morning.

From a review of the minister's duties, we pass, as proposed, to the inquiry, Have the ministrations of the religion of the gospel here, been duly attended and improved ?

Though he were an angel from heaven, the success of the minister's labors must depend entirely on the disposition of the people duly to regard his instructions and counsels. Among the countless multitudes to whom the divine Teacher ministered, how few became his devoted disciples and friends, though his mighty works and miracles bore testimony that he came from God ! With pleasure I can bear testimony, that the attendance of the people of this parish on public worship, through the whole of my ministry, has been highly commendable. This certainly was friendly and encouraging to him. What have been the effects on the hearts and lives of those who attended here, it is not for me to judge. This is a serious question, incumbent on each individual to decide for himself. Whilst it is the minister's solemn duty to take heed *what he preaches*, it is equally the solemn duty of the hearer to take heed *how he hears*, whether with readiness of heart to believe and obey the truth, or with a predetermination to disregard or reject what is preached. As previously remarked, for the disposition with which the people receive instruction, and attend upon the min-

istry, and for their improvement of them, they and they only must be accountable.

To those the minister joins in marriage he administers a solemn covenant. He offers his prayers to God that they may be faithful to their marriage vows. For their fulfilment of their sacred obligations you do not consider him as answerable. His was the duty to perform the ceremony in a suitable manner. The parties joined in marriage took upon themselves solemn obligations to endure with life. For the performance of their duties they and they only are answerable.

When, as in time past was almost the universal custom, parents presented their children for baptism, the observance of a holy and beautiful Christian ordinance, the parents, not the minister was accountable for the obligation they took upon themselves to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. On the part of parents there was an implied acknowledgment of a great duty, though none the more binding because acknowledged. The acknowledgment of an obligation is a blessing if it prompts you to one duty. The minister is bound to remind parents of their duty to those God has given them, and as far as he can to impress them with a sense of their obligation. There his duty ends. The momentous responsibility is for them to answer, at

the approaching solemn meeting of parents and children. The effect of the minister's counsels and exhortations always depends on the influence of *home*, just as the plant and the vine depend on the *soil* that supports and nourishes their roots. The propitious sun, the dews and showers of heaven, without a good soil, cannot give them healthy growth and maturity.

As in other congregations, so in this, the communion has been administered to only a small proportion of those assembling. At the commencement of my ministry the number of church members connected with the parish was small. Every one of that number has departed from life. Of the twenty-five members admitted into the church during the first year of my ministry, not one remains among the living. When admitted they were past the meridian of life. So long as they continued as members of the parish and the church, they were as unexceptionably true and steadfast as perhaps any equal number we could find in any parish.

A great number, who during the half century, have been called away by death from the seats around this altar and this communion table, may we not hope so enjoyed and improved their days of worship and communion, that in the world of blessedness, they have, with much forgiven, some pleasant im-

pressions of this as the house of God and the gate of heaven—some approving remembrance of truths here spoken, prayers here offered, praises here sung, and of ordinances here administered. If life is immortal, memory lives with such accuracy and vividness as are unknown in this state of imperfection.

Those continuing, possessing the inheritance left them—this venerable, antiquated house of worship, in structure so unique, so attractive to strangers, one of the old landmarks—have a sacred trust to fulfil. Who can take a seat here but with associations moving to heart thrilling emotions, to the best affections God has implanted? Can we here lift up the voice and heart of praise and prayer, and not feel the sanctifying power of the thought of that multitude of the past whose hearts in their day glowed with strong faith, and with holy aspirations for the rest they now enjoy, and to which the messages of divine love are inviting us?

Of the improvement of the ministrations in the parish, during a great part of the half century, the witnesses are mostly gone to the spirit world. Few remain who can bear witness for the parish, or their minister, during that early period, or of the toils and griefs that were endured to maintain what was deemed a sacred right.

Of the imperfection of the services of the minister,

none can be more deeply sensible than himself. Happy for all if the lives of the parishioners have far surpassed in excellence the humble merits of their minister. From this parish have gone to different places, far and near, and to various pursuits, not a few, we rejoice to think, by excellent virtues to adorn human life, and by their influence to advance the religion we hold dear.

It is due to the parish to remark, that by a general attendance of public worship, especially in favorable weather, the heart of their minister has been encouraged to hope his labor has not been wholly in vain. A large and attentive congregation it has usually been his privilege to meet here.

The constancy of the choir in performing their part, I think has seldom been equalled. Not an instance, during the half century, is recollected, when there was no choir to perform one of the most delightful parts of worship. Many of the voices that used to lift up our hearts with grateful love and adoration before the eternal throne, are in the silence of death. Few remain, tremulous with age, to join in thanks for the past, and in glorious hope for the future.

The doctrines here taught, by those ministers of this parish who have been named, whether as so called orthodox or heterodox, I find no authority,

from any thing they published, to decide, excepting the last, whose ministry immediately preceded my own, the term of which was shortest. In the celebrated sermon by Mr. GAY, I think not a passage can be found to prove that he either embraced or opposed the Calvinistic faith. He had the reputation of being liberal in sentiments. The long continuance of his mental vigor, and of his labor in the ministry, gained him a distinguished reputation. The BIBLE was the rule of his faith. Charity was the practice of his life. He seems to have passed immediately from the pulpit to receive the crown of a faithful servant, in the blessedness of the immortal life.

On this occasion, we may further advert, I hope profitably, to our mutual duties and obligations. Whilst I have been deeply sensible that my sermons have been very imperfect, as have all my services, with this one redeeming quality, the consciousness I feel that they have been earnestly and heartily devoted to what I have judged to be the best interests of the people of my charge. With very few exchanges, during a large part of my ministry, to avoid frequent repetition, my sermons have been, as I deeply regret, too much hurried in preparation, to suit my own judgment.

The doctrine of faith, as the word is frequently used in the gospel, I have held to be, not a dead theory, but the doctrine of a Christ-like life. When Paul said, "Faith without *works*, is dead," by works he meant not a creed or theory. A body of *death* in the *soul*, why must it not perish the soul?

The chief duty of Christians is not to judge or condemn others, but to know and reform themselves—not to form or fight for theories, but to live pure and upright lives; to be better known by their fruits than by their words. We have believed, I trust, that the Christian spirit, with many errors in opinion, may possess the heart, and, like the sun's influence, through night, and dew, and cloud, upon the plant and flower, may beautify and perfect the life. Many influences, besides the sun's cloudless splendor, God gives to make the earth fruitful. The most glorious truths that Jesus taught, can not even be known without following his example. Earnestly do I wish I had done more deeds of kindness and charity, rather than preached more popular sermons, or those of more rhetorical finish and beauty. *Well* it has been said, that "man is imitative. What he wants most is *not* lessons, but *models*."

Christ came to be the Light of the world. Without his deeds of love, his life, could his religion have been well understood and truly loved? The immor-

tal soul, however feeble, darkened, or depraved it may become, I have considered as a creation, not of human progenitors, but of the Spirit of God, capable of being progressively renewed, and made a more glorious image of the Divine Original. Repentance, conversion, regeneration, salvation, I have considered as synonymous words, the great themes of the gospel to be preached, and lived out, to redeem the soul from the wretchedness and ruin of a sinful heart and life, not so created of God, but perverted by education.

Grateful acknowledgments I owe to an extensive circle of friends,* whose ear my voice cannot reach but my heart remembers. I hope I may not forget that I have had many such who have honored me with high trusts, gratefully accepted, though entirely unasked; to be regretted only as imperfectly fulfilled.

Your improvement of my ministry can not be fully known until the light of eternity shall reveal it. "We sow in tears" and in darkness. The minister who turns *one* sinner unto God gives joy to angels. To have led *one* bewildered in ignorance and sin, whom God yet loves, to thirst after the life, the divine beauty, a participation of the glory of the

* In the town, the senatorial and congressional districts.

Eternal—is it not more than enough to reward the toils of a long ministry ?

Mine, to you, I hope, has not been the deplorable destiny of a minister, perpetually wasting the energies of life for a religion chiefly an imposing form, or a splendid theory, to amuse ; or of mere contention for will worship. Religion, if it be like the most beautifully symmetrical, but *lifeless* form—in some of the stern realities of life, must be too chilling and repulsive to take to our bosoms. Creeds, though never given by the divine Teacher, may contain some truth, but the Christian *life* is infinitely better, as a test that we are of God. If I have labored to persuade my hearers to be bigoted, uncharitable sectarians, I pray God to forgive me.

You will suffer me to be so faithful to my own conviction as to say, that alienations and strifes among Christians, are to the world the great obstructions to the progress of true religion. I speak not of differences in opinion, but of unkind and bitter contentions, dark spots in the feasts of charity, which we would hope the increasing light of our age may soon cleanse from the beautiful garments of Zion. I am glad, that a few years since, this parish tendered the hand of Christian fellowship to the ministers of all the different societies and denominations in the town. Though not accepted, it well

became us as liberal Christians. It was an act honorable to the Christian name, and the parish.

We have lived in much peace among ourselves ; not because we have always agreed in opinion upon all questions, but because we have been mutually forbearing and forgiving, resolved, I trust, that no worldly interest or earth-born passion should have dominion over us ;—that if adversity or reproach befel us, it should emulate us to be yet better Christians ;—better to adorn a name that should be forever dear to the descendants and successors of those whom God in his all-wise Providence planted here ; whose hands erected this time-honored house ; whose prayers, and toils, and sacrifices have brought down to us so many distinguished blessings.

Let the peace that reigns here continue to be the peace of right principles, of honest lives ; the peace of a parish, richer, more honored, than increased numbers or accumulations of wealth, or illy acquired fame could ever confer.

I have spoken of the changes of the past, ordained of God as we are, to dissolve the endearing relations of earth—to fade, to decay in body and in mind—to die and pass away to a state of being of which we know so little, are concerns too interesting not to arrest frequent, solemn thought. Our fathers, our intimate relations of the past—ours, once as

dear to us as life—ours,

“ Not for this span of life alone,
But for a being without end,”—

to be remembered, loved, followed.

Here, to-day, with no promise to one present, of a future half century on this side of the impenetrable vail—the memory of the past is full of lessons to teach *us*, that

“ Eyes that now beam with health may yet grow dim,
And cheeks of rose forget their early glory ;
Languor and pain assail each active limb ;
Life will not prove all sunshine ; there will come
Dark hours for all.”

How, wisely, calmly to meet them—this we would learn.

The love and joy of the bridal day, could they last through all time, would *they* be wise who would accept them, never to know the joys of the perfect, the felicity of the Infinite, that have not entered the hearts of the children of earth ?

You will, to-day, excuse this repetition. Our weddings I have desired so to solemnize as to make them the sanctifying of affections that God intended to be so formed as never to die.

The baptismal ordinance I have administered as a recognition by parents for their children, or by the receiver, of a seal of God and of Christ upon the soul, to be sacredly kept from being effaced ; to be a memorial of a covenant never to be broken.

Our communions we have celebrated, may I not say, with humble yet most delightful pleasure ; with a tenderness suited to meet that blessed spirit whose wounds for us, can never, without ingratitude, be forgotten—closing in

“ A sweet, low song,
Gentle as the dews of night,
And breath of evening.”

When parted from the multitude of those with whom some of us so long mingled around this altar in interests and affections, we believe to be as deathless as the soul, how is the religion endeared to us that tells us, that to them

“ Death was sleep
From which none ever wakes to weep,”—

the gain of a world,

“ Where parting is unknown.”

Blessed days in the holy place ! Blessed discipline of years bringing us to find peace with God, and fitting us for happier scenes—to meet the revelation of the divinely beautiful in God.

For the forbearance and kindness extended to me by the parish, or by individuals, when in ill health my power to sustain my professional duties has failed, I trust I shall never cease to be duly grateful.

The trust I received here has chiefly passed, and soon must entirely pass to another's hands. I rejoice to believe it is committed to one of eminently approved qualifications for the office. But all must

not be left to depend on his exertions. Let the people have a hearing ear in the sanctuary, an understanding heart, at all times, and willingness to obey the truth and can we doubt that thus the parish will prosper, measuring many half centuries ?

The history of the past is monitory ; it shews that patriarchs and prophets, clothed with the authority of revealed truth, had not power to save the people of God from degeneracy.

If we have contributed to the advancement of pure religion, of salutary reform in social morals, in which some who are gone took, with some who remain, a bold and active part, that service, this pulpit, these time-honored walls are witnesses of a work of value high above the richest ores the earth embosoms.

We have arrived at a crisis that forbids the Christian and the patriot to be unclad with the armor of firm principle, and of invincible determination to hold sacred the birthright, now *yours*—quickly lost if not faithfully guarded. Happy are we if we may have nothing less than the testimony of a *good*, a *faithful* conscience, that we, as a parish and their minister, have maintained an integrity that shall not dishonor the Christian name. It is the highest, best of all wisdom to *deserve* a good name.

I would earnestly exhort you, beloved friends, to “stand fast in one SPIRIT.” This you may do with-

out being of the same opinion on all points. Be one in spirit as the blessed Son was one with his Father.

Many men's opinions are better than their lives, and some men's lives are far better than some of their opinions. What, says one, "are all the various Christian communities, other than various pews in the same church?"

One truth in the *life*, let us not forget, is better than a thousand upon the lips. Jesus spake as no man had ever spoken, but his actual life was the best expression of his holy and divinely beautiful soul.

Before the final hour of the half century has arrived, we have, with great propriety, I think, taken this holy Sabbath to review the past.* Whatever have been our deserts, God has smiled upon us. Many times our wishes he has answered with blessings, that have seemed to me as signal tokens of his favor. May the future be to you, my friends, much more prosperous than the past has been. By a cordial, faithful co-operation with a good minister you have power to make it so.

Vividly it comes to my remembrance, to-day, that in my first sermon after my ordination, this was the

* The Sabbath next preceding the anniversary of the ordination.

text : " But none of these things move me ; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Few remain in life with me to remember the text of that day, and the deep emotions that moved in many hearts. That text was selected with the intention to declare the purpose, the faith, the courage, a young minister most needs, when the elements around him were dark and threatening, and when but faintly he could have imagined, what might move him, might break and scatter the flock committed to his charge, and quickly perish the hope that animated his friends. The flock has continued unbroken, though the pledge has been but poorly redeemed.

To forget, to-day, all these things, would seem to me ingratitude to God, to whom is due the unfeigned acknowledgment of all our blessings.

It remains now, that in the faith confirmed by past experience, we commend to the same Providence that has smiled on us, the direction and kind keeping of this ancient church and parish, and him who in the future shall minister here in the gospel. Be assured, my friends, that ministers can only *assist* you to save yourselves ; that you are to be

Christians, good and happy parishioners, by your faithful use of the means of instruction and improvement.

Soon the impenetrable vail will part us. With our duty done, and with faith that we shall go to *them* in the immortal, blissful life, who shall not return to us, clothed in "the beauty of the Lord our God," why should it not inspire us with joy?

God hath said to thy soul—

"He is a God of love."

Immortal being! Be thou to him a soul of love.

"Let your love abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment. That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."

APPENDIX.

The associations of this occasion were deeply interesting. The House in which this First Church and Parish in Hingham worship, so antique in structure, was erected in 1681. It is probably the most ancient house of worship in the United States, and seems to stand as a conscious witness of olden time. Situated on the brow of the ancient Cemetery, where repose the generations of the Past from the first settlement of the colony, it has an aspect of solemn grandeur that commands veneration.

The Cemetery has been greatly enlarged, and by munificence and taste, made a beautiful city of the dead.

Though of dimensions seldom equalled, on the day of celebration, the old House was densely filled.

The exercises of the anniversary were in the order usual on the Sabbath.

The performances of the large parish Choir, interspersed with anthems and hymns, were excellent.

Highly appropriate and impressive prayers were offered by Rev. CALVIN LINCOLN, the associate Pastor.

The sermon by the senior Pastor was succeeded, in the afternoon, by singing the following original Hymn :

WRITTEN BY JAMES H. WILDER, ESQ.

Tune—"Old Hundred."

Within these walls that time reveres,
Through aisles by generations trod,
Around a pastor crowned with years,
A grateful people seek their God— .

To praise His name for days of old,
When strength to hand and heart He gave;
And on the shepherd and the fold
His choicest blessings still to crave.

Long years thy servant here hath wrought,
 For which, kind Heaven, accept our praise ;
 For all the truth he's lived and taught,
 Oh bless the remnant of his days !

Bid hope serene, within his breast,
 With pleasant memories sweetly blend ;
 Then, gently on his head to rest,
 The ' crown of glory ' shall descend !

For all the past, we thank Thee thus—
 Thine was the power, be Thine the praise !
 As with our fathers, be with us,
 And lead us long in wisdom's ways.

And when, at last, life's race is run,
 Pastors and people here no more,
 Unite us all around Thy throne,
 To live Thy praise forevermore !

At the Parish Festival, on the next succeeding Wednesday evening, the following original Hymns were sung :

A SONG FOR THE OLD CHURCH.

WRITTEN BY JAMES H. WILDER, ESQ.

Tune—"America."

Old church ! a song to thee,
 Child of antiquity,
 To thee we sing !
 Around thine aged form
 Sweet recollections swarm,
 And with affection warm
 To thee they cling.

Of ages past we learn,
 As to thy face we turn,
 Thou reverend pile !
 Thy form and features tell
 How wisely and how well
 Our fathers sought to dwell
 Beneath Heaven's smile.

Those stout old beams of oak,
 Unscarred by Time's hard stroke,
 As years have flown—
 Thy builders' hope declare,
 Whose toil it was and prayer
 That we, their sons, might share
 Blessings their own.

Their monument art thou,
 Before whose years we bow
 With love sincere :
 House, that our fathers made,
 Church, in whose sacred shade
 Their forms to rest are laid,
 Thee we revere !

There, firm and fast thou'st stood,
 Through all vicissitude,
 For long gone years—
 In faith and hope begun,
 The pride of sire and son,
 A triumph hast thou won
 O'er all thy peers.

And there long may'st thou stand,
 Unharmed by human hand,
 By age unbent—
 While generations more
 Than yet have gone before,
 Shall seek thy hallowed door,
 On Heaven intent !

SONG.

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM KENTON.

Right welcome friends ! 'Tis well we meet,
 The hoary one to cheer ;
 Who fifty years hath served us well,
 And still for good is here ;
 Is here to serve sons' sons of those
 He from the christening nursed,
 While wide the generations spread
 Of those who loved him first—
 In auld lang syne, glad friends,
 In auld lang syne ;
 We come to cheer a friend made dear
 In auld lang syne.

Spared thus to stand, like HOBART firm,
 Yon staunch old bark to guide,
 As NORTON, WARE, or GAY might wish,
 A LINCOLN at his side,
 He lives in us his faith to prove,—
 That He whom he hath served
 Will ne'er His faithful servant leave
 By toil and years unnerved.

For auld lang syne, glad friends,
 For auld lang syne;
 Let hearts be light with joy to-night,
 For auld lang syne.

Hail, reverend pastor, heart and hand,
 To sires and sons endeared!
 Thou'st given the children spirit's bread,
 As thou their fathers cheered;
 And we will not deny thee now,
 When sinks the languid arm
 Outstretched for us with constant zeal,
 Through storm as well as calm.
 For auld lang syne, good sire,
 For auld lang syne;
 With grateful hearts we give thee joy,
 For auld lang syne.

Thou seest not all thy people here;
 Time's changes thou hast known,
 Hast felt and shared; yet, mid them all,
 Thou wast not here alone:
 Earth's comfort sweet, in joy or woe,
 Is near thee still to bless,
 And we, thy children, still implore
 Your joys may ne'er be less.
 For auld lang syne, good friends,
 For auld lang syne;
 We're here to cheer our parson dear,
 For auld lang syne.

SECOND PART.

Should old companions on life's way,
 When slow the blood and chill,
 Keep not the heart with kindness warm,
 Nor friendship's part fulfil?
 Should faithful mentors, friends and guides,
 When spent with toil or time,
 Themselves not meet the kind regard
 They lavished in their prime?
 In auld lang syne, glad friends,
 In auld lang syne;
 Should we forget true kindness met
 In auld lang syne?

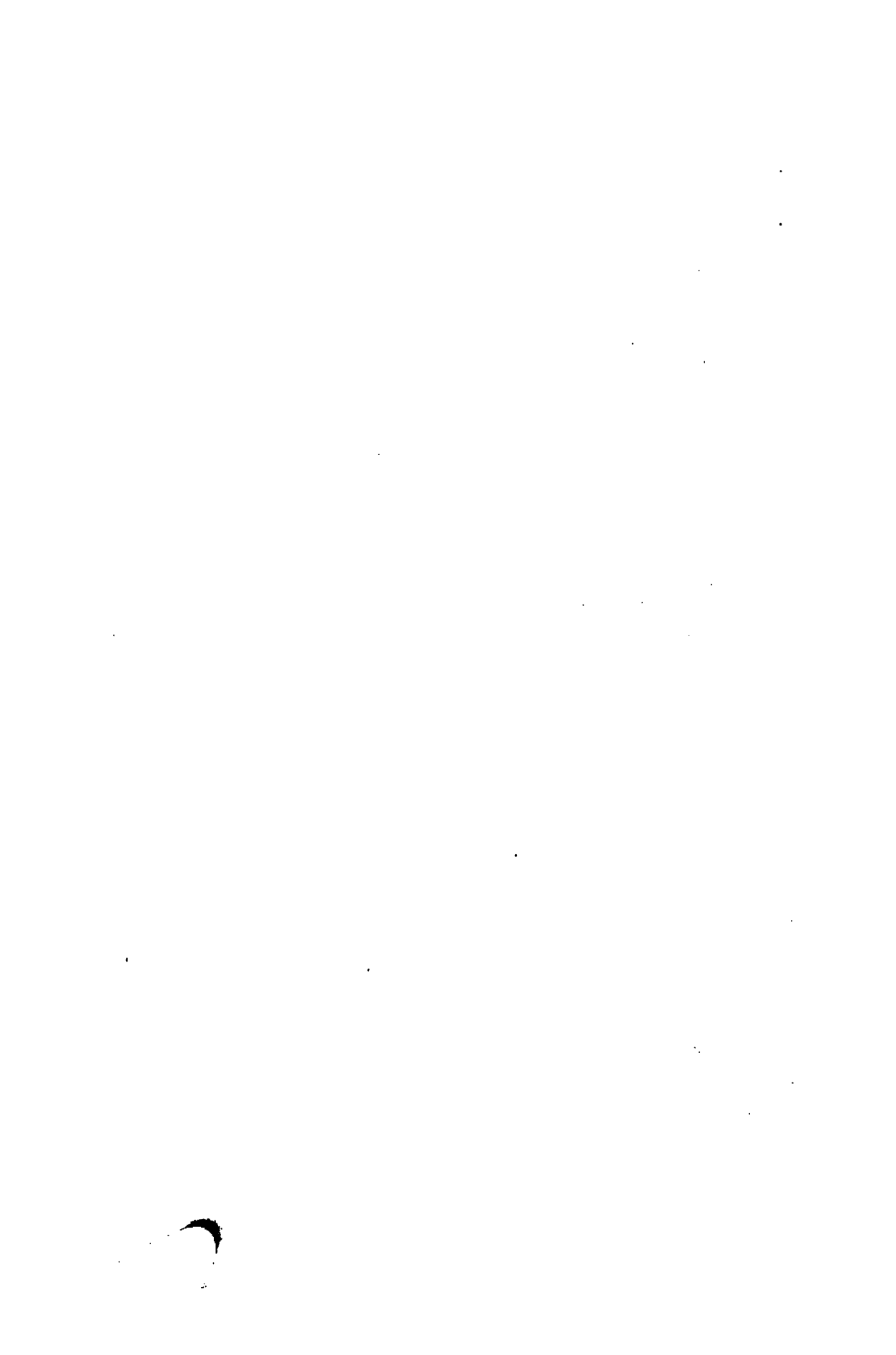
Shall he who teaches, counsels, guides,
 At least, in age be left
 Uncertain of the Heaven he praised?

Of trust in good bereft?
 Our sire who consecrated names,
 Who sealed in Hymen's bands,
 In sorrow soothed, in death might serve,—
 Shall *he* want hearts or hands?
 For auld lang syne, glad friends,
 For auld lang syne;
 Shall we forget our kindly debt
 For auld lang syne?

Up then our hearts, with one glad throb,
 And from this cheering scene
 Fresh impulse towards the good and true
 Posterity shall glean;
 Shall know who faithful serves the right
 Will ne'er in age be left
 Unserved, unsolaced and unblest,
 Of hope and Heaven bereft.
 For auld lang syne, glad friends,
 For auld lang syne;
 The faithful rector must not faint,
 For auld lang syne.

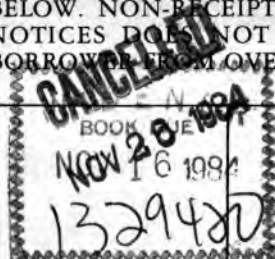
Long life and health, our teacher true!
 And thou his help-meet still!
 Long may your walk thus pleasant be
 Together down life's hill.
 The God ye have rejoiced to serve,
 With us and with our sires,
 Rekindles in our hearts to-night
 Towards you love's holy fires.
 For auld lang syne, good friends,
 For auld lang syne;
 Love kindles in our hearts afresh,
 For auld lang syne.

Long be the voice of RICHARDSON,
 Familiar in our ears;
 And, when we part, wear more like him
 His mantle fifty years.
 Then Heaven, as ever, yet will bless
 Our ancient pilgrim shrine;
 The Lord will with his people dwell,
 His people more divine;
 And often will the shout arise,
 " For auld lang syne;
 The Lord hath blessed us and will bless,
 For auld lang syne.





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